



Top 15 news trends of 2011



photo Suzi Richards/SU Drum

15. Casino concerts

The Sky Ute Casino Resort upped its game in 2011 by bringing several big-name acts to Ignacio, including Joan Jett & the Blackhearts, Uncle Kracker, and the Pow Wow Comedy Jam, which included North American Indigenous Image Award-winning comedians Marc Yaffee, Vaughn Eaglebear and Howie Miller. Look for the trend to continue next year as it hosts country legend Dwight Yoakam on Saturday, Jan. 21, 2012.



photo Robert Ortiz/SU Drum

14. Drums

Drums carry the cultural heartbeat of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, and 2011 saw local groups like Yellowjacket/12 Gauge as busy as they've ever been. From festive powwows to more solemn occasions, such as political inaugurations, the drumbeat kept us all on pace.

13. Air quality

The Southern Ute Air Quality Program, part of the tribe's Justice & Regulatory Department, had a banner year that included a deal with Williams Four Corners that will have all of us breathing easier for years to come. Under its terms, Williams will replace aging equipment at its Ignacio natural gas processing plant with modern turbines, significantly reducing emissions in the area.



photo Ace Stryker/SU Drum



photo Jeremy Wade Shockley/SU Drum

12. SunUte's 10th year

The SunUte Community Center reached the decade mark in 2011, and its 10th year of operations was the best yet. The center played host to a variety of athletic leagues, drawing hundreds of kids and adults from around the area, and many tribal members continue to enjoy their free membership to the state-of-the-art facility. Staffers celebrated 10 years in business with a Dec. 3 commemoration event.

11. Brunot hunting

Since the tribe resecured its rights to hunt on 4 million acres of Colorado land known as the Brunot area — first promised in an 1874 treaty with the federal government — it has become a popular area for Southern Ute hunters, as evidenced by the number of game shots we received this year.



photo Jeremy Wade Shockley/SU Drum

10. Animas-La Plata Project



Lake Nighthorse reached its 123,500-acre-foot capacity on June 29, according to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, bringing to fruition a vision many decades in the making. To honor the longtime involvement of both Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribal members, organizers of the project dedicated the scenic Tribute Garden on Oct. 21. The lake could be open for recreation as early as 2012.

photo Jeremy Wade Shockley/SU Drum



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9. Heritage Dancers

Southern Ute tribal members have long known the joy of traditional dances and shared it with other Native Americans in powwow settings, but 2011 saw the non-Native community also taking an interest. The tribe's Heritage Dancers were a hot commodity this year, being invited to perform at various events at locations such as the Durango-La Plata County Airport, the Springs Resort & Spa in Pagosa Springs, Colo., and local public schools.



photo Jeremy Wade Shockley/SU Drum

8. Fires

It seemed at times like the whole country was on fire in 2011, and the Southern Ute Indian Reservation was not exempt. More than 20 fires burned through the area this summer, eight in a one-week span in early July. By far the largest of the season was the Sambrito 2 fire, which burned about 535 acres before being fully contained on Aug. 29.